



**Region 1  
490 N. Meridian Road  
Kalispell, MT 59901**

**Old Steel Bridge Fishing Access Site  
Pier Removal Project  
Decision Notice**

**August 9, 2018**

**Description of the Proposed Action**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to remove a damaged and unsafe fishing pier from the bank of the Flathead River at Old Steel Bridge Fishing Access Site (FAS) near Kalispell, Montana. The fishing pier has been damaged by erosion over the last five years and is currently unsafe for use. FWP attempted to stabilize the undercut structure in 2016, but further erosion in 2017 and 2018 has damaged the structure beyond repair and it is at risk of collapse. FWP has posted the facility as closed since the spring of 2017, but people continue to use it. FWP is proposing to eliminate the hazard by removing the structure and restoring the riverbank to more natural conditions. FWP would then assess the possibility of funding and installing a new pier in a more suitable location that isn't subject to such erosion.

**Public Involvement**

The Old Steel Bridge Fishing Access Site Pier Removal Environmental Assessment (EA) was released for a 15-day public comment period on July 10, 2018. FWP ran legal ads in the Daily Inter Lake describing the proposed project and the availability of the draft EA. The draft EA was posted on FWP's official web site. FWP also issued a press release that described the project, availability of the draft EA, and the public comment timeline.

**Summary of Public Comments and FWP Response**

FWP received five e-mailed comments about the proposed project. Two comments supported the project, two opposed the project, and one was neutral. The two comments supporting the project cited safety concerns, and one of them also mentioned that the structure in its current state is an eyesore. One comment opposed the project, saying that the cost of removal would be more than the cost of repairs. FWP estimates that the cost of repairs would significantly exceed the cost of removal, and that any repairs would be only temporary because the river is prone to flooding. FWP does not currently have funding available to repair or rebuild the pier. The other comment opposed to the project cited the


loss of access for elderly and disabled people. FWP recognizes this is an issue and would begin to pursue funding and a more suitable location for a new pier once the immediate safety hazard is mitigated. The neutral comment suggested that FWP should try to salvage the steel from the structure for use somewhere else due to its historic value. FWP thanks everyone for their comments.

#### **FWP Final Decision**

In reviewing all the public comments and other relevant information, and evaluating environmental effects, I hereby approve the removal of the fishing pier at Old Steel Bridge FAS.

Through the public review process described above, FWP found no significant impacts on the human or physical environments associated with this proposal. Therefore, the EA is the appropriate level of analysis, and an environmental impact statement is not required.

Noting and including the responses to public comments described above, this decision notice together with the draft EA will serve as the final document for this proposal. FWP believes removal of the failing fishing pier and restoring the riverbank to more natural conditions is the most effective way to eliminate the immediate safety hazard. Once the immediate safety hazard is resolved, FWP can pursue funding and a more suitable location to build a similar facility.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jim Williams", is written over a horizontal line.

Jim Williams  
Regional supervisor

8/10/18  
Date